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# EDUCATION WEEK

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## Study Confirms 'Fears' Regarding Commercial Tests

### *Low-Level Content and Pervasive Effects Found*

**By Robert Rothman**

WASHINGTON—In the most comprehensive study of its kind yet conducted, researchers from Boston College have found evidence to confirm the widespread view that standardized and textbook tests emphasize low-level thinking and knowledge and that they exert a profound, mostly negative, effect on classroom instruction.

The three-year, $1 million study, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and released here last week, found that only a handful of the questions on major commercially available tests in mathematics and science, as well as on tests included in textbooks, measured the kinds of conceptual knowledge and problem-solving abilities reformers say should be integral to instruction in those fields.

And a survey of more than 2,200 teachers, along with site visits in six cities, confirmed that the tests influenced instruction and that most of the effects were negative, the study found. This was particularly true in classrooms with large numbers of minority students.

"The results of this study confirm our worst fears," Luther S. Williams, the head of the N.S.F.'s education and human-resources directorate, said in a statement.

George F. Madaus, the director of the center for the study of testing, evaluation, and educational policy at Boston College and the study's director, said the findings present a "depressing picture."

"If this doesn't change," he said at a press conference here, "an inordinate amount of time, attention, and preparation will be given to the wrong domains in math and science, domains that are not reflecting the outcomes we want."

But the study drew an angry response from commercial publishers, who said that they have been revamping their products to

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## Crusaders in Detroit Fight To Keep Board Seats

**By Ann Bradley**

DETROIT—Four years ago, voters here elected a slate of four school board candidates who called themselves the HOPE team and promised to bring equity, diversity, and

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choice to the city's schools.

Their persistence in trying to fulfill those campaign promises, however, may prove to be the board members' undoing at the polls next month.

The HOPE team's philosophy is simple: Schools must be freed from bureaucratic constraints and given the money and authority to develop their own unique characters and programs.

But in their zeal to turn around what they criticize as a top-down school system, the board members have run seriously afoul of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, the administrators' union, and other labor groups here.

Last month, the city's 10,500 teachers and other instructional employees staged a

*Continued on Page 10*

Rebecca Cook

**Clockwise from top left, calling themselves the HOPE team, Frank Hayden, David Olmstead, Lawrence C. Patrick Jr., and Joseph S. Blanding were elected on a platform of reform. Today, they find themselves under fire for creating "empowered" schools like Marcus Garvey African-centered academy, right.**

## Colo. Voters Face Menu Offering Radically Divergent Reform Fare

**By Mark Walsh**

GREELEY, COLO.—Gov. Roy Romer doffs his suit jacket and rolls up his sleeves before launching into his stump speech here on why Colorado voters should support a sales-tax increase and reform package for the state's public schools.

Speaking before the Rotary Club of Greeley, an agricultural center about an hour north of Denver, the plainspoken Democratic Governor scribbles feverishly on a sketch pad as he describes the financial morass of the public schools, a mess he contends was caused by the legislature.

"This is not fun to be your Governor and come into a room and say I'm going to raise your taxes," Mr. Romer tells the Rotarians. "It's not a popular stand for a politician. Why do I do it? We've got a disaster about to happen to public education. We've got a cut coming of about 11 percent. That word should not go out from Colorado to the nation."

A few hours later the same day, at a health-food restaurant in suburban Denver,

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another group of Coloradans also has gathered to hear about a plan to reform education. But it is a radically different vision of reform than that embodied in Amendment 6, the Governor's Children First measure.

The group of home-schooling parents

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## *Election Talk Aside, Education in Values Gains Momentum*

**By Debra Viadero**

Even before officials of the national Republican Party this summer began to make the term "family values" a part of their Presidential campaign rhetoric, thousands of schools across the country were quietly carrying out their own plans to instill values in children.

Once largely acknowledged to be one of the missions of schooling, character education has received little attention from educators over the past 20 to 30 years, experts in the area say. *(See Education Week, Feb. 7, 1990.)*

In the past five years, however, that has changed, and some signs now suggest that the movement to return values to the standard curriculum is gaining momentum. Among them:

- Representatives of national education and ethics groups have been meeting since last spring to form a coalition devoted exclusively to promoting and supporting efforts, both in and out of schools, aimed at developing good character in young people.

Formal plans for the network, known as the Character Education Partnership, will

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## Beethoven Project, at 5, Still Seeks 'Fighting Chance' for Children

Yael Routtenberg

**From left, Larry and Jacquelyn Moore with their two daughters, Marissa and Marquetta, at the Beethoven Project.**

**By Deborah L. Cohen**

CHICAGO—Marshall Ray's parents are proud that their 5-year-old son can spell his name, recite his telephone number and address, and has a big vocabulary for his age. And they beam when they tell how Marshall scored higher than most of his classmates on a test he took before entering kindergarten.

But it is not these traditional measures of readiness that they first mention when asked to gauge how well equipped their son was for school.

Instead, they brag that he works well with others, that he understands his place in the family, and that he discerns what it means "to have trust and distrust."

"He knows what it is to walk in strength, to walk in self-esteem," his father and namesake, Marshall Ray, says. "There are certain things we can't get away with because he picks it up right away."

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## Also in the news


**15** **An Anti-Gay Agenda?** Oregon voters will decide the fate of a measure that would require schools to discourage homosexuality.

## IN SUMMARY

**A Call for Change**
The Education Department and the National Science Foundation have released their first joint statement calling for changes in the way science and mathematics are taught.
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**Bucking the Chancellor**
Five New York City community school boards are bucking Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez's orders to use a 1st-grade curriculum guide that promotes respect for homosexuals. **Page 5.**

**Restructuring in Los Angeles**
With the threat of a districtwide teachers' strike looming, a reform panel in Los Angeles has released its plan for restructuring the troubled school system.
**Page 5.**

**Playground Dangers**
School officials are learning lessons from a $15 million settlement in the case of boy who was severely brain-damaged after falling at a neighborhood playground.
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**Information Lacking**
Experts advising the President on Hispanic education say they are having trouble finding information on what the federal government is doing to help Hispanics.
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**Job-Training Platforms**
The three major Presidential contenders disagree on many issues, but all three seem to concur on the need for more and better job training.
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**CONVENTIONS IN PRINT**

A special pullout guide to the annual convention of the National Middle School Association.

**Begins opposite Page 20.**

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# ACROSS THE NATION

## NATIONAL

### Advanced Placement Test-Taking Up Again, College Board Reports

The number of high school students who took Advanced Placement examinations grew again last year, and the proportion of test-takers who were members of minority groups also increased, the College Board reported this month.

In 1992, 378,692 students took 566,036 of the college-level tests, the board reported, up from 351,144 students who took 523,326 A.P. tests a year ago. The number of 1992 examinations is nearly triple the 189,146 taken in 1982.

As in past years, two-thirds of the tests in 1992 received a score of 3 or more on the exams, a level generally accepted for course credit at many colleges and universities.

Minority students made up 27 percent of test-takers in 1992, the board found, up from 26 percent in 1991 and nearly double the 14 percent of the 1982 test-taking population. The number of A.P. grades of 3 or higher for minority students increased by 14 percent—to 90,000—over 1991, compared with an 8 percent increase for white students.

The proportion of women who took exams in the sciences also increased, but women continue to lag behind men in those fields. In 1992, 41 percent of the mathematics and science exams were taken by women, and they earned 38 percent of the grades of 3 or higher. In 1987, by contrast, 37 percent of the math and science exams were taken by women. Over all, women constituted 53 percent of the A.P. test-takers this year.

■ **A federal appeals court in Philadelphia has ordered the judge overseeing a massive suit by schools against asbestos manufacturers to disqualify himself from issuing any further rulings.**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit agreed with a motion by the defendants in the case and told U.S. District Judge James McGirr Kelly he could no longer oversee it.

The defendants, nearly 30 asbestos manufacturers, had asked the appeals court to disqualify Judge Kelly because he had attended a 1990 conference at which the dangers of asbestos exposure were discussed.

"Although we believe the Judge acted with integrity at all times, we also believe the circumstances surrounding his attendance at the conference created an appearance of partiality," the appeals-court judges said in their ruling.

The case has been reassigned to U.S. District Judge James T. Giles.

In their class action, 35,000 public and private schools are attempting to recoup the costs of testing for and removing asbestos and are seeking punitive damages from the companies. ■

## DISTRICTS

### Phila. Archdiocese Mulls Report Calling for 6 High School Closings

The secondary school system of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia is "at risk" due to rapidly declining enrollments and a deteriorating financial situation, and no plan currently is in place to rescue the schools, a report issued by the archdiocese this month concludes.

The long-range planning report, developed for the archdiocese by the management-consulting firm Coopers & Lybrand, calls for possible school closings, renewed efforts to find funding for the schools, and the eventual decentralization of the now highly centralized system.

The report recommends the closing of six of the archdiocesan high schools—St. James, Archbishop Kennedy, Bishop Kenrick, Little Flower, Northeast Catholic, and West Catholic. It also calls for four other schools—Bishop Conwell, Bishop Egan, St. Maria Goretti, and St. John Neumann—to merge into two coeducational programs.

The archdiocesan secondary schools are currently more than $10 million in debt, officials say, and a number of schools are running at less than half their capacity.

Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua told a news conference this month that "no decision about the future of any school has been made." He pledged that such decisions would be made only after consultation with pastors, parents, principals, and others in the community.

The report also calls for the archdiocese to begin phasing in open enrollment in the high schools beginning next fall, and to begin efforts to make each school in the system financially and academically independent.

■ **A federal appellate court has ruled that a California school district erred in unilaterally expelling a student who was later found to be disabled.**

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit said last month that officials in the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District should have provided a special-education hearing for the student before expelling him.

The boy, a 7th grader with a long history of disciplinary and academic problems, had been expelled from school for threatening another student with a starter's pistol.

An independent hearing officer, in a hearing held after the incident, determined that the boy was emotionally disturbed and ordered the district to pay the parents' legal fees and to reinstate the boy. But school officials argued that the boy was not entitled to that hearing because he had not previously been determined to be disabled.

A lower federal court upheld the hearing officer.

■ **Eliot Wigginton, the founder of the Foxfire literary magazine and education program, resigned his teaching post at the University of Georgia in Athens Oct. 6, in the wake of further allegations that he has molested children.**

Mr. Wigginton was indicted in Rabun County, Ga., last month on charges that he undressed and fondled a 4th-grade boy during an overnight trip to a Foxfire event.

This month, the prosecution filed a motion to introduce evidence of previous incidents that allegedly took place between 1969 and 1982. These allegations involve eight males between the ages of 14 and 19 who each say that Mr. Wigginton gave them drugs or alcohol and molested them, according to Jay McCollum, the chief assistant district attorney for Rabun County.

Seven of the males were students of Mr. Wigginton at the time and one was a part-time employee of the Foxfire program, Mr. McCollum said.

A hearing to determine whether the additional allegations are admissible as evidence in Mr. Wigginton's trial is scheduled for Oct. 22.

Mr. Wigginton has denied all of the charges, said his lawyer, Bruce Maloy.

Mr. Wigginton, who was suspended by the university when it learned in August that an indictment was forthcoming, said in his resignation letter that he needed to "devote considerable time and effort in responding to the charges that have been brought against me."

■ **Seven middle school boys have been recommended for expulsion from the**

## *Won on a Peel*

It should come as no surprise to school-cafeteria workers everywhere that the world-champion potato peelers come from among their ranks.

Five school-kitchen workers from the Shelley, Idaho, district peeled their way into the *Guinness Book of World Records* this fall during the city's 64th annual Idaho Potato Harvest Festival. Marj Killian and her teammates—Janene Utkin, Terry Anderson, Marilyn Small, and Barbara Pearson—peeled approximately 1,064 pounds of potatoes in 45 minutes.

The team had to end up with more than 830 pounds, 11 ounces of skinless potatoes to break the previous world's record, set by a team from Emmeloord, the Netherlands, at a potato festival there.

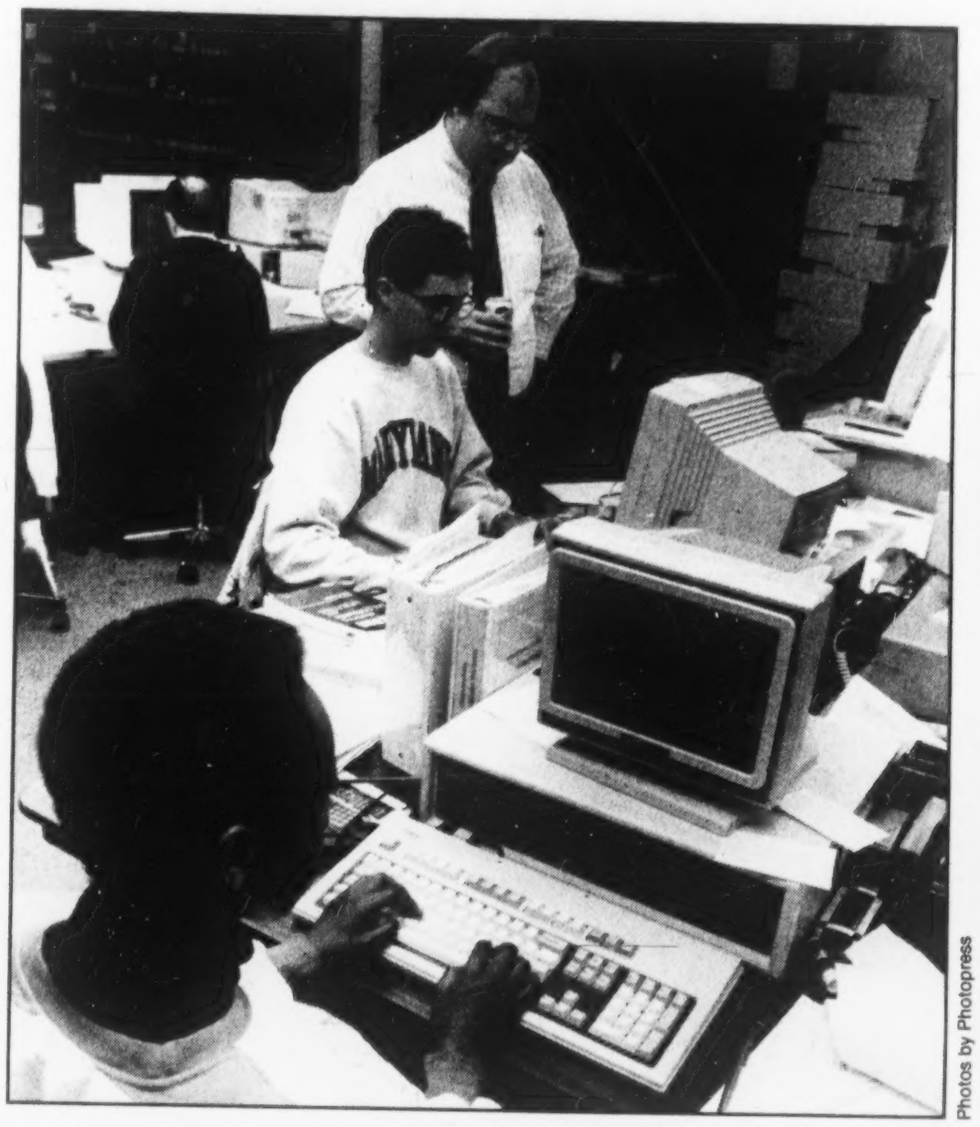
Shelley's potato peelers have been trying to break the record for several years. They thought they had done it at last year's festival, only to discover later that the Dutch team had surpassed its own record.

*Guinness Book* officials issued the guidelines for the contest, but were not on hand to witness it.

Leila Cabib

Under the rules, the potatoes had to be peeled by five people in 45 minutes using only a standard kitchen knife. To qualify, only 51 percent of the potato skin had to come off.

—U.G.



Photos by Photopress

**Much of the work that makes news under the name of government agencies like the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Labor Department, and the Environmental Protection Agency is actually conducted by Westat Inc. The research firm in suburban Washington, which specializes in data collection and analysis, usually ranks high in the fierce competitions for federal contracts.**

much more an art than a science."

"You can write in a book, 'Be sensitive to respondents,' " he continues. "But until you've gone through several surveys, you just don't know" how to do that.

David L. Bayless, another vice president, also notes that the company stresses the importance of not imposing on schools.

"When people go to training," he says, "we make one point: When you go to a school or a school district, you are a guest of that school or school district."

"There is a burden to data collection," Mr. Bayless adds. "But schools are out there for teaching and learning."

### Range of Projects

A list of the firm's projects includes many of the major education studies the federal government conducts.

It has for years, for example, served as a subcontractor to the E.T.S. in designing samples for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a Congressionally mandated project that tests about 100,000 students every two years in reading, writing, mathematics, and other subjects.

The company has also contracted with the National Center for Education Statistics to conduct the National Household Education Survey, a poll of some 60,000 households on such issues as early-childhood education, school safety, and discipline.

Mr. Bayless notes that the household survey is a "natural" for Westat, because of its experience in surveying families on health and the environment. The new survey, he notes, represents the first attempt by the N.C.E.S. to gather education data outside of schools.

"People in education might take time getting the concept that you can get information from households about education," he says. "That's not a new subject for us to deal with."

In addition to the survey work, Westat is conducting analyses of high school and college transcripts to learn about student and teacher course-taking.

For example, one project is examining the college transcripts of teachers who took part in the Schools and Staffing Survey, a major study by the N.C.E.S. Although teachers in the survey told interviewers what courses they took, the transcript study will provide more reliable information, according to Mr. Bayless.

"They'll say, 'Did I have a course in math 20 years ago?' " Mr. Bayless says.

Drawing on its expertise in data collection, the company has also worked with school districts to help them improve their ability to gather and analyze information.

Last year, for example, Mr. Bayless headed a project to develop standards for data collection and reporting. And, under a contract with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the firm is working with state education agencies and 15 school districts to assist them in conducting surveys on risk factors associated with the virus that causes AIDS.

"We are sharing with these agencies, so they can see that they in fact can do quality work," Mr. Bayless says. "We don't have to do it all ourselves." ■

covered is that lower-performing companies should be obsessed with face-to-face meetings with the customer—not surveys, not market research, not some of the other sophisticated ways of listening to the customer.

I think for schools, it says, "Identify who your customers are and have face-to-face meetings with them about what their needs are." Don't send out a survey team. Don't hire a consulting firm. Don't do written surveys. Do it face-to-face, because then there's a clarity of understanding.

**Q. Are there some management practices that are universally beneficial?**

**A.** Very, very few. One is communication of the strategic plan. And this was startling. What this simply means is, "Does everyone know what business you're in and where you're headed?" In the United States the answer is no. Our survey found that 15 percent of senior management doesn't know, that about 50 percent of middle management doesn't know, and about 90 percent of front-line management doesn't know. Only about 23 percent of boards of directors know.

This is another instruction to boards: Don't go off and sequester yourself at a nice hotel . . . and develop a strategic plan and then not come back and tell anybody.

**Q. Based on your study, what words of caution would you have for school districts interested in pursuing "total quality" management?**

**A.** I think a couple of cautions. If they're going to hire an external consulting company, they should query the firm on results. "As a result of doing this, what kinds of results are your clients getting?" Secondly, I would query them, "Do you practice what you preach?" It's a lot easier to talk about this stuff than to do it. And the third, for schools, is to focus on a couple of key objectives and to be clear about the outcome of the activity. . . . The question is, "What two things do we want to achieve, and how will we know we've achieved them? And what process do we want to put in place in order to do that? And does everybody understand that?"

What we're saying is: Stick to the basics. Keep it simple. Don't get fancy. And be focused. That, I think, is good advice for every school system, because if you've mastered those basics, you can then expand on them. ■

**DIMENSIONS**

## Federal Education-Research Support

**Federal Resources for Educational Research and Development**

| Department/ Agency | Current $ in Millions | | | Change in Constant (1992) Dollars | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FY 1989 | FY 1991 | FY 1992 | $ in Millions | Percent |
| Education | 146 | 159 | 171 | 7 | 4% |
| National Science Foundation | 21 | 54 | 53 | 29 | 121% |
| Health and Human Services | 35 | 39 | 65 | 26 | 67% |
| Defense | 13 | 16 | 30 | 15 | 100% |
| TOTAL | 215 | 268 | 319 | 78 | 32% |

NOTE: The amounts reported represent only the direct federal dollars provided for educational research and development. Matching funds from states and localities and institutions are not included; nor is direct training support for students and teachers (including scholarships and fellowships).

SOURCE: National Education Goals Panel.